

## Section A: Book Review

For the past five years I have taught first grade. This fall I will be starting a new adventure by collaborating with another teacher to teach a first/second grade multiage. While I am very excited, I have been struggling with how I will be able to successfully meet the needs of all my students. When discussing my fears with a couple of other teachers that have already been teaching multiage in my building, one of them mentioned their love of inquiry groups and how it was geared towards children of all levels. She also explained that in their classrooms they don't have science and social studies in their schedules, but instead have inquiry. I had taken a class in college about inquiry based learning in science, but never heard anything of it again. Seeing a book about using inquiry-based learning in my classroom sparked my interest. What a perfect time for me to learn about incorporating this method in my classroom since it was going to be expected for me the following school year.

Harvey's and Daniels' text, Collaboration & Comprehension: Inquiry Circles in Action, is a resource for teachers that both informs and guides teachers on the use of inquiry circles. This book utilizes students' innate curiosity to know what is going on around them to guide students to take control of their own learning by conducting investigations about topics that they find interesting. Through the use of inquiry circles, students are instructed in three areas, comprehension, collaboration, and inquiry through the gradual release method. By teaching in this method, students are more motivated as well as more well rounded. They not only have a lot of strategies, but have learned a lot of content as well. They are learning in the

context of real life, which is found to be more motivating and will be retained better than simply memorization of facts.

Inquiry circles follow a four-stage model: Immerse, Investigate, Coalesce, and Go Public. Within the immerse stage, students are developing curiosity, building background knowledge, and finding topics. In the Investigating stage, students are developing questions, searching for information, and discovering answers. In the Coalesce stage, students are intensifying their research, synthesizing information, and building knowledge. Lastly, students during the Go Public stage are sharing their learning, demonstrating understanding, and taking action (Harvey & Daniels, 2009, pgs. 61-62). These stages are spiraling in the sense that students are going back and forth between the stages. These stages are followed in the four types of inquiry presented in this text; Mini Inquiries, Curricular Inquiries, Literature Circle Inquiries, and Open Inquiries. This text guides teachers on this process through examples of inquiries in action as well as lessons. It ends with how to assess students and addresses teacher's common questions and concerns.

The great thing about this text is that it both informs about the inquiry learning process and current research as well as guides teachers to utilize this process in their own classroom by giving them a variety of information and tools. Like I have previously mentioned, I took a class on inquiry learning in college. While I learned about the use of inquiry in science, I never thought about how it can be applied to all areas of the curriculum and in my classroom. This book has given me the tools I need to motivate my students to learn as well as meeting the needs of all of my students next year. I learned how to get my students to truly collaborate and

learn to read by reading to learn allowing them to gain strategies and content at the same time. Through the explanation of the Comprehension Continuum, I have learned how to get my students to comprehend at a higher, deeper level. Through discussion with my group, I took away different ways inquiry groups can be utilized in all areas of education as well as discussed solutions to issues I foresee arising.

While the concept of inquiry learning sounds very challenging and time consuming at first, reading this book as made me realize that inquiry groups are something I can easily utilize in my classroom this year. Mini inquiries are a great way to introduce the method and for my students and myself to get comfortable with the process. I foresee me utilizing these often in the beginning of the year. I also would really like to utilize literature circles in my class in the middle/end of the school year. I have tried these in the past utilizing role sheets without much success. By de-emphasizing the role sheets, I believe my students will have better discussions, learn to collaborate, as well as develop a greater love for reading.

Collaboration & Comprehension: Inquiry Circles in Action is a text that teachers will want to hold on to for years for reference. It will be one they are constantly referring back to. It provides a wealth of information. I especially love how the book give the reader lessons, sample inquiry projects, assessments, as well as having answers to commonly asked questions. However, there are a few areas I see this text lacking it. While the examples and lessons provided are very helpful, I was left wondering about how my students with special needs and my English Language Learners (ELL) would be able to be successful. In addition, while management is addressed in this text, I feel that it does not come as simply as

Daniels and Harvey make it seem. While in a perfect world I would teach my children how to collaborate and stay on task, which is just not the case. Lastly, while I believe inquiry circles can be utilized in all areas of the curriculum, I am left wondering how they would be utilized in math. There are examples of reading, social studies, and science, but not math. Even though I have pointed out a few things I am left wondering about after reading this text, it is definitely a great book that I would recommend to all teacher to get them started in incorporating inquiry circles in their classrooms.

Harvey, S., & Daniels, H. (2009). *Comprehension & collaboration: Inquiry circles in action*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.